Ursula Caporali

SHABTIS

for orchestra and gamelan

This piece has been written as part of the portfolio of pieces of the PhD in Composition 2010

Sydney Conservatorium of Music
University of Sydney
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Egyptian history and particularly the story of the youngest Pharaoh of the XVIII dynasty, known as both Tutankhamon and Nebheperura intrigued me during childhood. I would proudly dream of becoming an archeologist and collected many materials, especially about the 1922 discovery of the “King Tut” tomb. My father, for my ninth birthday, gave me an official “Tut” photo book which I still jealously protect from the passing of time.

This work takes its primary inspiration from the objects found in the tomb amongst which, the most significant was Tut’s golden mask. To the Egyptians, that colour signified the imperishable, eternal, and indestructible. There was a Senet game found and also 400 Shabtis statues which lend their name to the title of this work, and were believed to come to life once entombed inside the pyramid becoming the pharaoh’s afterlife assistants. The Senet game, a version of which is musically played out by the orchestra is thought to be the most ancient board game. Similar to backgammon, but using chopstick-like counters instead of dice, two players moved their pieces along 30 places, some of which were marked with hieroglyphics signifying good or evil. The first player to exit the board became the winner and was thought to have symbolically defeated their enemies of the underworld and to have achieved eternal life.

The task of composing this piece was similar to playing a game. Shabtis can be defined as a “Musical game” often with Senet rules applied to musical materials such as melodic lines, permutations of pitches and rhythmic patterns. Stability in both the process and the structure of the whole is assisted by referring to simple and consistent sets of rules.

Ancient instruments such as the rattle-like Sistrum, some specially built for this work by John Piccione and Enzo Mesiti, enrich the percussion sound pallet and are performed with symbolically ritualistic movements. Other sonic elements evoke ancient sounds and are produced with Gamelan instruments. The modern harp blended with sounds from the inside of the piano always present with a special pedal I designed and built to produce piano harmonics also adds to this flavour.

The material performed by the Gamelan ensemble guides the orchestra through the work’s “game-path” in a ritualistic function. At the end of the game after the Slow Dreaming Walzer and a Tutti game “Tut” is finally awoken. A new atmosphere and a previously unknown sound is heard. The Shabtis are awake and are ready to serve eternally in a new dimension of time, space and sound.

The First performance was in the Conductors’ Series Concert on the 16th of September 2010 in the Verbruggen Hall at the Sydney Conservatorium. It was performed by the Sydney Conservatorium Symphony Orchestra and players of the Gamelan group with Prof. Peter Dunbar-Hall, all conducted by Anthony Clarke.

Ursula Caporali

Duration: approx 12 minutes
List of Instruments

1 PICCOLO
1 FLUTE
2 OBOES
2 CLARINETs in B flat
1 BASSOON
1 CONTRABASSOON

2 HORNS
2 TRUMPETS in B flat
1 TROMBONE
1 TUBA

2 PERCUSSIONISTS:
Player I: 3 Temple Blocks, 3 Tom Toms, 2 Suspended Cymbals, 2 Sistri, 1 Bass drum
Player II: 3 Wood Blocks, 3 Tom Toms, 2 Sistri, 2 Bongos, Crotales (Antique Cymbals)

FOUR GAMELAN PLAYERS:
4 Gongs, 1 Trompong, 2 Gangsa Pemade, 2 Gangsa Calung, 1 Kempli, 2 pairs Ceng Ceng Kopyak.

1 HARP (Amplified)
1 PIANO and (HDPIUR *)

STRINGS: (Around this number of players)
12 V. NI I
10 V. NI II
8 V. LE
6 V. C
4 D. B

A pair of Wooden Chopsticks for each orchestral player

Suggested arrangement of instruments:
Legend for Shabtis:

1. The score is written in C.
2. The metronome markings are approximates, and may be slightly changed.
3. Piccolo reads an octave higher, Contrabassoon an octave lower, Double Bass an octave lower and Crotales 2 octaves higher.
4. The accidentals follow the normal rule. Also passages with ostinato repeated notes keep the same accidental unless indicated (see for example the score section D bar 27, or section E bar 33).
5. All trills are semitone trills. Only the harp has tone trills where indicated. All trills start from the bottom note.
6. Permutation rules:
   The free permutations are usually always made with four notes; the tempo of the permutations is fast and the players insert rests ad Libitum. The notes are permuted randomly. In some permutations performers may play octave displacements of the permutation material ad Libitum.
7. All Musicians have a pair of Wooden Chopsticks each for the finale sections (Letters O and P). The Chopsticks will be provided by the Composer for the first performance.
8. Section K - Gamelan game (bar 90) rules:
   The gamelan soloist chooses from material 1, 2 or 3 (see table attached in gamelan parts). The other 3 players respond with material that it not being used by the soloist. In the last entrance they perform the canon (same material of section O) for 2 or 3 repetitions.
9. Section L: Orchestra and Gamelan game follow the rules indicated in the score.

Note for the conductor:
For the Senet Games see Orchestra score and Gamelan score. For Section L - Orchestra and Gamelan Game, coordinate the entry of the Gamelan with the Orchestra during the rehearsals.

Notes for the Strings:
Harmonics produced by the strings have subtle bow change. The sections marked divisi are usually split between equal numbers of players, with exception of bars 33-43, where I stand soli is indicated.

Note for the Harp:
The harp is amplified. Only the harp has tone trills (where indicated). The Harp Solo Cadenza (section F) is around 15 seconds.

Note for the Piano:
The piano is amplified. The piano has a special device that produces harmonics invented by the composer called HDPIUR. For notes regarding its use and the performance see table in separate part. The piano has a microphone on the last string of the piano (pedal note). The harmonics is noted as a rhomboid low D.

Note for the percussionists:
The percussionists have the following instruments each:
Player I: 3 Temple Blocks, 3 Tom Toms, 2 Suspended Cymbals, 2 Sistri, 1 Bass drum
Player II: 3 Wood Blocks, 3 Tom Toms, 2 Sistri, 2 Bongos, Crotales (Antique Cymbals)
The instruments are arranged in a circle. The composer also provides special handmade Egyptian style instruments called Sistri. The players will sometimes be moving their arms in circles as a visible ritual. Some mallets are indicated but in most passages they can move from one instrument to the other using the same mallets, and player may make their own choice. Crotales are played normally unless asked to arco them. In the Walzer make it not too loud.

Note for Gamelan players:
For the arrangement of the Gamelan instruments, see picture below.
For Section K the cadenza should be organized during rehearsal and not longer than 2 minutes. Players should refer to material and sequence choices in the score.
For Section L - Orchestra and Gamelan Game, coordinate the entry of the Gamelan with the Orchestra during the rehearsals.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Pages</th>
<th>Bars</th>
<th>Tempo marking</th>
<th>Instruments</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3 Times ad Lib Solo Sistri</td>
<td>Sistri*</td>
<td>The two percussionists will draw a circle while playing the Sistri with their arms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2-7</td>
<td>Molto lento As a Ritual $\times = 52$</td>
<td>Sistri and Gongs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>2-4</td>
<td>8-25</td>
<td>$\times = 56$</td>
<td>Tutti and Gamelan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>26-28</td>
<td>$\times = 60$ ca.</td>
<td>Tutti and Gongs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>29-46</td>
<td>Più Mosso</td>
<td>Tutti</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Harp Cadenza Max 15 seconds</td>
<td>Soloist Harp</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>12-15</td>
<td>48-58</td>
<td>Fluidly $\times = ca 54$</td>
<td>Tutti, Piano and Harp and Gamelan (at bar 57)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>16-17</td>
<td>59-64</td>
<td>Agitato</td>
<td>Tutti and Gamelan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>18-19</td>
<td>65-73</td>
<td>$\times = 78$ and accel. than rall molto</td>
<td>Tutti</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>74-89</td>
<td>Slow Dream Waltz $\times = 48-52$</td>
<td>Not full Orchestra</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>Gamelan Game Cadenza max two minutes</td>
<td>Solo Gamelan</td>
<td>See Gamelan Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>26-27</td>
<td>91-102</td>
<td>SENET GAME</td>
<td>Tutti and Gamelan</td>
<td>See score for rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>103-108</td>
<td>Veloce $\times = 72$ca than molto rall.</td>
<td>Solo Gongs and Sistri</td>
<td>Same material of B but different dynamic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>29-30</td>
<td>109-114</td>
<td>Vivo $\times = 78-80$ ca</td>
<td>Tutti and Gamelan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>115-154</td>
<td>From PP to FF and accel.</td>
<td>Tutti and Gamelan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>35-36</td>
<td>155-169</td>
<td>Sostenuto pianissimo crescendo</td>
<td>Tutti</td>
<td>All Musicians with Chopsticks Light goes down with Music</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Harp Cadenza 15 seconds

Percussion
- Piccolo
- Flute
- Oboe 1
- Oboe 2
- Clarinet in Bb 1
- Clarinet in Bb 2
- Bassoon
- Contrabassoon

Horns
- F Horn
- Tenor Horn
- Trumpet in Bb
- Trombone
- Tuba

2 Systri

Crotales

Percussion 1

Percussion 2

Gamelan
- 4 Gongs

Strings
- Violin I
- Violin II
- Viola
- Violoncello
- Double Bass
Free fast permutations - rest ad lib. after two bars start changing octaves randomly.

Free fast permutations - rest ad lib. after two bars start changing octaves randomly.

Free fast permutations - rest ad lib. after two bars start changing octaves randomly.